



## ***Youth Opportunities Fund / Youth Capital Fund***

### ***Case Study: Plymouth***

#### **Summary**

The YOF/ YCF panel in Plymouth is made up of a diverse group of young people, who have been able to use their links in the community to ensure that the funding is accessed by young people deemed 'hard to reach'.

Young people have been given the support they need to make informed decisions and have been able to influence systems.

#### **What young people have been engaged?**

The panel has a good spread of members from across the city including young people from the Chinese, Somalian and other BME communities, a young person with a disability, unemployed and GLBT young people and Youth Parliament representatives. Many of these young people were able and confident in their own communities but may not have used their skills outside that environment. Young people feel they have

“learnt to take other people’s opinions”

as well as express themselves;

“I used to find it really difficult to work as a team. English is not my first language. Now it doesn’t matter if I make mistakes”.

The Youth Service used existing links with a number of groups, including the Race Equality Council, to recruit the group. A couple of members shared valuable experience from previous involvement in the Community Champions Fund.

There are plans to target particular groups not currently involved for next years panel, including travellers and young people with learning disabilities.

#### **Role and involvement of young people**

Young people have evolved their own methods for assessing applications. A scoring system has been replaced by discussion and the panel are considering replacing some paperwork with a video application in future.

The panel meets weekly and values support from youth workers. Other experts have been called in (e.g. health and safety, asset management) to provide guidance; the panel in turn have been able to advise groups and will be acting as mentors, delivering training to the next group of young people.

## Changes to public service delivery and lessons learnt

The involvement of young people has highlighted some unnecessarily bureaucratic systems and resulted in a commitment from council departments to streamline processes, as well as encouraging departments to work together. The methodology is seen as 'a way forward for managing future funds' and the Youth Service feel that they will be able to 'lead the way' in a Children and Young People's Service looking for ways to benchmark the involvement of young people.

Ensuring that applications are genuinely from young people has also sent a message to applying organisations about ensuring young people's choices are reflected in their plans.

## Benefits and outcomes

The diversity of the panel and their links to different communities, as well as existing Youth Service partnerships, have encouraged a wide range of groups to make applications. The Fund has financed specialist wheelchairs for young people to access beaches; cultural events by and for young people as part of the Respect festival; IT equipment for young people in care, and a range of sports and outdoor activities. Newspaper coverage of a young person from sheltered accommodation accessing funding for a sailing project has encouraged others to apply.

In the words of young people, this "shows how many young people are up for doing something together" and they are convinced the fund has "reached the right kind of people – people that need it".



